
Obituary

Professor Sally Solomon

April 19, 1944 – February 25, 2015



It is with great sadness that I find myself having to write about the death of my dear friend and mentor Professor Sally Solomon who passed away on the 25th February 2015 after a short period of illness. Sally Solomon was born on 19th April 1944 in Glasgow. She worked in academia for over 40 years and she published widely in the general field of Egg formation and Egg quality. Her passing deprives the scientific community and the poultry industry of one of its most outstanding individuals. She was a scientist respected and loved by all who knew her.

Sally graduated with an Honours Degree in Zoology from the University of Glasgow and was subsequently appointed as a Junior Lecturer in the Department of Veterinary Histology at Glasgow University. In 1972, as a post graduate student of Bob Aitken, Sally became interested in

the avian oviduct and the egg formation process. John Fryer and Tom Baird from the Department of Chemistry at the University were hugely helpful to Sally at this time and taught her about the different types of microscopy which were to become the trademark of her research.

Throughout the 1980s Sally's research focused on the ultrastructural features of the avian eggshell and in 1991 she published the critically acclaimed book entitled 'Egg and Eggshell Quality'. In this book Sally described for the first time a range of ultrastructural variants found within the eggshells of commercial laying hens and how the incidence of these could be affected by disease and environmental stress. Sally recognised the importance of these findings and actively engaged with stakeholders from the poultry industry developing a series of 'Egg Quality Workshops'. These two day courses were attended by geneticists, nutritionists, producers and civil servants working as part of the egg inspectorate and all benefited from Sally's unique ability to effectively communicate her science to such a varied audience. By demonstrating its application to industry problems Sally and her team established a close working relationship with the poultry industry developing research contracts, which focused on specific industry related problems, pioneering knowledge exchange and demonstrating impact, factors only now being fully recognised by funding bodies and university management.

Sally's enthusiasm was boundless, so it was no surprise when Professor Amoroso of Cambridge University encouraged Sally to develop a joint venture in the early 90's with the Cayman Island Turtle Farm to look at their hatchability problems. Funded by the Royal Society this led to a full study of the breeding success of wild turtle populations in Padre Island, Florida and in Cyprus. In 1997, the University of Glasgow Turtle Conservation Expedition was launched as a result of this. The turtle conservation

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project continues to this day through two of Sally's former post graduate students Prof Brendan Godley and Dr Annett Broderick, who are now based at the University of Exeter. Another venture demonstrating Sally's humanity and drive to help others and to promote science was the Travel Lab Project, which aimed to give a route to employment for young science graduates who visited schools to tell children about the wonders of biology.

In recognition of her academic achievements Sally was appointed to Professor of Poultry Science in 1995, the first ever female Professor in the then Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Glasgow. Outside the university, Sally had many distinguished roles including President of the WPSA (UK) branch (1998-2002) and chair of the Nominations Committee of WPSA (2011- present); chairperson of the European Federation Working Group 4, and of British Poultry Science Limited. In 1998, Sally was awarded the Gordon Memorial Medal in recognition of her services to Poultry Science. Most recently in November 2014 Sally was thrilled to be the joint recipient of the Howie and Dennis Surgenor Cup for outstanding contribution to the Scottish poultry industry.

Throughout her career Sally also supervised a number of post graduate students. As one of these, I was fortunate enough to continue to work closely with Sally for over 25 years until she retired in 2003 and moved permanently to Brantome in France. However as an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the School of Veterinary Medicine, she continued to present Egg Quality Workshops to audiences throughout Europe as well as Malaysia, Thailand, Russia, Morocco, Turkey and the U.S.A., and carried out some consultancy work, which brought her back to her beloved Glasgow and my lab from time to time. Sally's influence also went beyond science when in 2003 she curated her first exhibition of art inspired by electron microscopy, in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow. She also greatly influenced Natalie MacLeod's 'Natural Produce' exhibition, a wealth of scientific pattern, form and texture based on eggshell ultrastructure which exhibited in the Atrium Gallery, The Glasgow School of Art, in 2005. Sally's warmth, humour and enthusiasm was infectious. Her passing has made us all take stock and to make the effort to reconnect with old friends. Despite our collective sorrow we have shared many happy stories and memories of Sally in our conversations. So in a strange way Sally is still working her magic, we had such good times.....

A funeral service will be held for Sally in Brantome, France, on wed 4th March where she and her husband Roger have spent so many happy years. A memorial service in Glasgow is planned to celebrate her life in the early summer.

Prof Maureen Bain, University of Glasgow